



# Headquarters Highlights

## SecDef announces vaccination program changes

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Defense Department will temporarily slow its mandatory anthrax vaccination program because of a shrinking supply of tested, certified vaccine, Defense Secretary William S. Cohen announced July 10.

According to Marine Corps Maj. Gen. Randall L. West, a senior Pentagon advisor on chemical and biological defense, most of the remaining vaccine will be used to help protect those serving in the high-threat areas of Southwest Asia and Korea. Others will be deferred for the time being to sustain current supplies.

“In light of this slow down, we will do our best to ensure those Air Force men and women at highest risk are vaccinated according to the Secretary of Defense’s guidance,” said Lt. Gen. Paul K. Carlton Jr., Air Force Surgeon General.

Protecting our forces against a known and viable threat must be weighed against ensuring every lot of the anthrax vaccine used meets national safety, purity and sterility standards, General West said. A full resumption of the vaccination effort will occur when a sufficient supply of FDA-approved and certified safe and effective vaccine is available.

At the beginning of July, more than 138,000 Air Force members had begun the anthrax vaccination series of six doses, which are given over 18 months and followed up with annual boosters.

“Since 1998 the biological threat has only increased. Since 1998 we have almost 58,000 troops who have had the full six-shot series and are now fully protected with the vaccine. Almost 400 thousand more are at least partially through the vaccination schedule. But our goal is to have all of our forces fully protected,” General West said.

Precise plans for resuming vaccinations will be based on the recommendation of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices and consultation with the FDA.

Even though most of the details resulting from this slow down have been decided and will be announced soon, some details remain to be worked out, according to DoD sources. @